



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Highway  
Administration**

Texas Division

June 21, 2021

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In Reply Refer To:  
HDA-TX

The Honorable Lina Hidalgo  
Harris County Judge  
1001 Preston, Suite 911  
Houston, TX 77002

Dear Judge Hidalgo:

This is in response to your letter of May 6, 2021 regarding the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP), which you jointly signed with Mr. Christian D. Menefee, Harris County Attorney. In your letter, you request clarification on the scope of the pause FHWA requested of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and to which TxDOT agreed, regarding NHHIP project activities. Specifically, by letter dated March 8, 2021, FHWA requested that TxDOT pause further contract solicitation efforts, including the issuance of any Request for Proposals.

We share the concerns raised by your recent letter suggesting that TxDOT is not engaging in the pause and may be proceeding with other aspects of the I-45 Project, including right-of-way acquisitions needed to move the project forward, before the conclusion of our Title VI investigation. That is why we sent TxDOT the attached letter on June 14, 2021, to provide additional clarification and direction regarding the scope of the pause to specifically cover right-of-way acquisition, including solicitations, negotiations, eminent domain, and final design activities.

We have also informed TxDOT that FHWA has elected to review TxDOT's compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act in issuing its Record of Decision for the NHHIP. This review will inform FHWA's determinations regarding TxDOT's compliance with its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FHWA, executed on December 9, 2019, including project or program reassignment pursuant to the MOU and intervention in litigation pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327(d)(3), as well as the ongoing Title VI investigations.

By separate letter, I have provided an identical response to Mr. Menefee.

Sincerely,

Achille Alonzi  
Division Administrator